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Forest Insect Spray Project Over Half Done

Aerial spraying of a Douglas-fir tussock moth infestation north of Burns, Oregon, was at its peak this week as the U.S. Forest Service project passed the half-way mark.

The project involves the spraying of some 67,000 acres of the Malheur and Ochoco National Forests to combat the tussock moth and prevent economic losses that could total millions of dollars.

If control of the moth is not achieved this summer, the infestation could spread to 200,000 acres by next year, Forest Service entomologists warn.

Randall F. Perkins, project leader, said the spraying appears to be highly successful, although it will be another week before technicians can fully evaluate the effectiveness of the DDT-oil mixture used to control the forest killer insect.

With luck and continued good weather the spraying can be completed in a few more days, Perkins reported. Six machines from Evergreen Helicopters, McMinnville, Oregon, are doing the spraying, and two helicopters from Reeder Flying Service, Twin Falls, Idaho, are being used for observation. A Forest Service helicopter is also on the project for administrative and observation use.

(more)

Helicopters are being used for the spraying because of their proven ability to apply insect controllants with maximum precision. The machines are being flown at 45 miles per hour and about 30 feet above tree tops. Spraying begins at dawn and usually ceases around 9 a.m. before rising temperatures and winds can cause any appreciable drift. Spraying ceases whenever wind velocities exceed 5 to 6 miles per hour. There is no spraying of open meadows or streams, Perkins emphasized.

Visitors to the project this week included J. Herbert Stone, Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service; Walter Lund, Assistant Regional Forester for timber management; and Edward Marshall, Assistant Regional Forester for state and private forestry, all from Portland.

Marshall is chairman of a joint committee operating independently of the actual spraying operation to determine and evaluate any side effects on other resources. Scientists and technicians from several state and federal agencies, including the Pacific Northwest Forest & Range Experiment Station, are joining in the surveillance program.

The carefully conducted project has been approved by several groups, including the Federal Committee on Pest Control and the Northwest Forest Pest Action Council.

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